

Appl. No. 10/016,826
Amdt. dated October 28, 2003
Reply to Office action of May 28, 2003

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration of the rejection of the claims and allowance of the application as amended are respectfully requested. The Examiner's 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, rejection of claim 3 has been removed by amending the claim to more clearly describe applicants' invention as including a threshold level for which obtained levels of an individual's total serum bilirubin below that threshold level can be used to characterize that individual as at an increased risk for rheumatoid arthritis. The Examiner's 35 U.S.C. 103(a) rejection of claim 3 has been removed by amending the claim to describe the invention with greater specificity as including threshold levels of near or below 0.57 mg/dl for males and near or below 0.40 for females, the choice of those particular levels being unobvious as representing median values for threshold levels instead of mean values as shown in the prior art. The median levels are determined from FIG. 4 of the drawings and represent the values at which the half of a population having total serum bilirubin values above those values can be characterized at lesser risk for rheumatoid arthritis and that half of a population having total serum bilirubin values below those values can be characterized at greater risk.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that claim 3 has now been shown to define applicants' invention and distinguish it over the art of record.

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Applicants respectfully request, therefore, that the Examiner allow the application as amended.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Fredric L. Sinder".

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